

MEN'S SPRING RETREAT *to* KENTUCKY



POST-PASSOVER: A WORLD WITHOUT OPEN MIRACLES!

SOURCE SHEET AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Judaism is unique in that connection to belief in G-d goes deeper than just the intellect. It's all about the relationship. Consider the very first commandment given to the Jewish People when we left Egypt:

SOURCE 1: MITZVAH OF BELIEF IN G-D, EXODUS 20:2

I am the Lord, your G-d who **brought you out of the land of Egypt**, the house of bondage:

אנכי ה' אלקיך אשר הוצאתיך
מארץ מצרים מבית עבדים

This is the first commandment requiring us to believe in G-d, who introduces Himself as the G-d who took us out of Egypt.

Question: Why does G-d introduce Himself as the One who took us out of Egypt rather than as the Creator of the Universe? Isn't that a much grander demonstration of His power and omnipotence?

From the very beginning of Jewish History, G-d presents Himself as a personal G-d, who is intimately involved with us as a nation and as individuals and cares deeply about us.

Pesach was a time of open miracles and we accepted the Torah from this vantage point. But what about a time when G-d wasn't so apparent to the Jewish People. Take, for example, the dark days before the Purim miracle, when the Jews were exiled from the land of Israel and threatened with annihilation at the hands of Haman.

This dire circumstance is alluded to in the very name of the Purim heroine Esther:

SOURCE 2: THE NAME OF ESTHER IN PURIM STORY, TALMUD CHULIN 139B

Where is "Esther" alluded to in the Torah? As it is written, "I will surely hide My countenance on that day" Deuteronomy (31:18)

אסתר מן התורה מנין
הסתר אסתיר ואנכי
פני ביום ההוא

Question: Why do you think we know her as Esther, which means hidden, when her real name was Haddasah? Also, G-d's name is curiously absent from the story. Why?

Perhaps, the name Esther is a hint to a time when G-d will be Hiding and the Jewish People will "seemingly" be at the mercy of our enemies.

Consider another strange element of the story: The holiday is called "Purim" after the lots (dice) Haman threw to determine the best date to destroy the Jews. In essence the Holiday is called "Chance"!

Question: What do you think is meant by calling the holiday by the name Purim?

Take a look at a source which should provide some insight into both of these questions.

SOURCE 3: AN OVERVIEW: THE PERIOD AND THE MIRACLE,
R. NOSSON SHERMAN ARTSCROLL - THE MEGILLAH

The feast (beginning of the story) was in the third year of Achashveirosh's reign and the decree of extermination was in the twelfth year (the end of the story). What could be the connection? It was then that the pieces of G-d's jigsaw puzzle began to come together.

Though the story stretches out over a decade, when we read the megillah it feels like less than two years have passed.

Question: Why was the megillah written this way? Does the reason answer our questions about hiddenness and chance?

Mordechai and Esther string together for us the truly prophetic events of this decade - **connecting the dots** of the story - revealing the unmistakable Hand of G-d. Over a 10-year period, all or most of these "happenings" may have appeared as unrelated coincidences, but taken altogether they reveal a clear fact pattern.

G-d is working with us in all the details of our lives and there is NO SUCH THING AS CHANCE. Hence, the tongue in cheek name of the holiday – Purim!

OUR PRIVATE DANCE WITH G-D

From this time onward, we dance our own private dance with G-d – as a Nation and as individuals. However, to maintain our free will, G-d leaves it up to us how cognizant of this dance we will be:

SOURCE 4: THE BURNING BUSH, EXODUS 3:3

Moses said, "I must turn aside to look at this marvelous sight; why doesn't the bush burn up?" When Hashem saw that he had turned aside to look, G-d called to him out of the bush: "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Here I am."

ויאמר משה אסרה־נא ואראה את־
המראה הגדל הזה מדוע לא־יבער הסנה:
וירא ה' כי סר לראות ויקרא אליו אלקים
מתוך הסנה ויאמר משה משה ויאמר
הנני:

Question: Why do you think Moshe merited that G-d would appear to him? Take a look at the verse and see if it hints to an answer.

R. Yerucham Levovitz explains the verse in Deuteronomy (13:5), **"You should follow after G-d,"** as directing us all to follow after **"G-d's Providence."** If we don't try to see it, then we won't experience any providence, and we won't even know what providence is. **If, however, one does try to see providence, he will immediately see it in every step.** This was the secret of Moshe's experience with G-d. G-d saw that Moshe turned to look, and as a result, G-d called to him.

So, the first step is trying to turn towards providence throughout your life - to tune in and try to hear G-d's messages. **If you do this, you will see more and more of Him in your life.**

Question: Do you "turn to see" G-d in your life, or do you take things that happen to you at face value - as just the way things are?

Question: How can you be more mindful of G-d's messages in your life?

Consider the following source, seemingly extending this concept to an almost spiritual mathematical formula!:

SOURCE 5: DO WE SEE G-D OR THE LAWS OF NATURE?

RABBI CHAIM FRIEDLANDER, SIFSEI CHAIM, MOADIM, VOL. 2, P. 323

When we are disconnected from G-d and are unaware of Him, then G-d does not show His providence. It appears as if the hand of nature rules over us.

כאשר אנו במצב של אי דביקות וחוסר מודעות אין הקב"ה מראה השגחתו ח"ו, אזי נראה כאילו יד הטבע שולטת ח"ו

To the degree that we strengthen our belief in His providence, that is how much we will merit the manifestation of His special providence over us.

ככל שנתחזק יותר באמונת ההשגחה, באותה מידה נזכה והקב"ה יראה לנו את השגחתו המיוחדת

So, tuning in to Divine Providence not only allows you to hear G-d's personal messages to you, it actually increases the frequency of those messages! Wow!

Just a note to guide you along on this journey: G-d isn't only in the good things that happen to you, His Hand is in everything. The more you see His Hand in your life, the greater your relationship and trust will be, regardless of what is happening at any given moment in time.

Question: How would knowing G-d is involved in everything help you deal with challenging situations?

Question: Do you think that noticing G-d in good times would help you weather the not-so-good times, and feel His comforting presence there as well?

Perhaps we can take our Divine Dance with G-d to another level:

Question: Aside from trying to listen to our messages from G-d, and learn from them taking corrective action if necessary, is there anything else we can do to positively impact how G-d works with us?

SOURCE 6: THE MORE WE ATTUNE OURSELVES TO G-D'S WILL, THE MORE HE WILL BEND THE WORLD TO OURS. PIRKEI AVOT 2:4

Make His will like your will, so that He will make your will like His will. Nullify your will before His will, so that He will nullify the will of others before your will.

עשה רצונו כרצונך כדי שיעשה רצונך
כרצונו בטל רצונך מפני רצונו כדי
שיבטל רצון אחרים מפני רצונך

Question: What does it mean practically to make G-d's will your will?

By trying to resemble our Creator and being one with Him, we align with His Will and actually begin to share in His Power!

Question: How do you think we can go about this process of aligning with G-d?

(Hint: Learning Torah might be a good place to start! Stay tuned for tomorrow's learning module about Torah.)

A FINAL REALLY INSTRUCTIVE POINT ABOUT HOW TO READ YOUR DIVINE MESSAGES:

We all have goals, plans and objectives that we want to achieve, and many of them do align with G-d's agenda.

Question: What happens when everyday life occurrences get in the way of our plans, particularly when we are pursuing holy, worthwhile goals?

SOURCE 7: SOD HA'ADAM WORKSHOP, REBBETZIN T. TUKACHINSKY

Imagine you have front-row orchestra seats at the year's most popular Broadway show. As you get to your seats there are people already sitting there. They show you their tickets and they are exactly the same as yours. Obviously, someone made a big mistake, because theatre seats aren't double booked. G-d for sure doesn't double book a person in his/her life, so if you are trying to get something done, and your wife, child or friend needs you or some other problem at work comes up, pay attention to it. **Because G-d never double books!**

Question: Do you see examples of "double-booking" in your life that cause you frustration? How would this new outlook change your experience?

IN SUMMARY:

Level 1 is tuning in to your messages.

Level 2 is trying to listen, learn and react based upon how G-d "private messages you" through your life circumstances. And remember G-d never double books, so be present, moment to moment in your life.

Level 3 is to align your priorities with G-d's priorities, so you can tune into His messages, make the right choices and allow Him to open doors for you that you never even imagined possible!

Each of us is involved in a private dance with our Creator; How aware and engaged we are and how magical that experience can be is totally up to us!